



**PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

*Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.*

**DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff)** 118-5763

**1. General Information**

District name(s): Randolph-Macon Woman's College Historic District

Main Streets and/or Routes: Rivermont Avenue, Norfolk Avenue, N. Princeton Circle, Quinian Street

City or Town: Lynchburg

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Lynchburg

**2. Physical Aspects**

Acreage: 46.52 (approx.)

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban X Town \_\_\_\_\_ Village \_\_\_\_\_ Hamlet \_\_\_\_\_ Rural \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the district's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The proposed Randolph-Macon Woman's College Historic District comprises the historic core campus of Randolph-Macon Woman's College (presently named Randolph College) in the Rivermont neighborhood of Lynchburg, Virginia. The campus features an assemblage of buildings, structures, and landscape elements erected from the college's founding in 1883 through the present. The campus is bounded to the south by Rivermont Avenue, to the east by Norfolk Avenue, and to the west by N. Princeton Circle. A large, forested area, also owned by the college, borders the campus's northern boundary. The James River is located on the other side of the forested area. Stately residences and small-scale commercial buildings are situated in the areas east, west, and south of the campus. A circular drive extends from Rivermont Avenue to Main Hall. There are paved parking lots along Norfolk Avenue and N. Princeton Circle.

The approximately eighteen red brick institutional buildings are designed in various popular architectural styles, including the Queen Anne, Georgian Revival, Colonial Revival and various strains of Modernism. Three single-family residences, a boiler plant, and a log cabin are also sited around the campus. The landscape features and structures include a historic gazebo, engagement tower, outdoor theater, labyrinth, sundial, gates, garden, and various non-historic athletic fields and courts. Between Rivermont Avenue and Main Hall is a gently sloping, well-manicured lawn. Historic brick walls bound the original campus along Rivermont and Norfolk avenues and partially along N. Princeton Circle.

### 3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): Queen Anne, Georgian Revival, Colonial Revival, Neo-Expressionism, International Style

If any individual properties within the district were designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: William F. Poindexter, Edward Frye, Stanhope Johnson, Ralph Adams Cram, Warren Henry Manning (landscape architect), Clark, Nexson, and Owen, Vincent G. Kling & Associates

If any builders or developers are known, please list here: John P. Pettyjohn & Co., Vermilya-Brown Contracting Co., English Building Co., S.R. Gay & Son

Date(s) of construction (can be approximate): 1891-1911, 1920-1923, 1929-1930, 1937, 1949-1952, 1960-1963, 1969, 1971-1975

Are there any known threats to this district? N/A

#### **Narrative Description:**

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire historic district, such as building patterns, types, features, and the general architectural quality of the proposed district. Include prominent materials and noteworthy building details within the district, as well as typical updates, additions, remodelings, or other alterations that characterize the district.

Construction began at Randolph Macon Woman's College (RMWC) in 1891 and remained steady throughout the decade. Main Hall, the first edifice constructed on Randolph-Macon Woman's College campus, is sited impressively on a hill, overlooking a sloping, well-manicured lawn. Designed by Washington, D.C. architect, William M. Poindexter, in the Queen Anne style, Main Hall was constructed in several building campaigns spanning twenty years, from 1891 through 1911. The building is composed of five sections, including a central entrance tower (1893) flanked by end pavilions to the east (1893) and west (1896-99) with connecting hyphens, all constructed of hard-pressed red brick. A red brick rear annex with a side gable roof was erected in 1911.

As Randolph-Macon Woman's College rapidly grew in the first decade of the twentieth century, four new buildings with classical influences were constructed to accommodate the expanding student body and curriculum. East Hall (1904) and West Hall (1906) were both designed by Edward Frye in the Georgian Revival style. The Psychology Building and Thoresen Hall were both designed by William M. Poindexter, also in the Georgian Revival style, and completed in 1906. Although differing from Main Hall in style, their red brick construction, white trim, and proliferation of roof and wall dormers complement the central main building. All four buildings were erected in line with Main Hall, with the Psychology Building and East Hall to the east and Thoresen Hall and West Hall to the west. The buildings are connected through a series of arcades, known around campus as "trolleys."

The college continued to grow in the 1920s and 1930s with five new buildings, all designed by locally prominent architect Stanhope Johnson. The first building constructed, Smith Memorial Hall (1920-1923), continued the Georgian Revival tradition set by Poindexter. Notable Boston architect Ralph Adams Cram served as the consulting architect for this project. Situated at the corner of Rivermont Avenue and N. Princeton Circle, this four-and-a-half story building is T-shaped in plan with a cross-gable roof. Johnson continued to employ the Georgian Revival style for his designs of the subsequent buildings around campus, including Webb Hall (1923), Lipscomb Library (1929), Presser Hall (1929-1930), and Martin Science Building (1937). These buildings are all constructed of red brick and feature

a variety of Georgian Revival elements, such as symmetrical façades, cupolas, dentilled and modillioned cornices, porticos, and multi-paned windows.

Support buildings were also built on campus throughout the first half of the twentieth century, including Winfree Observatory (1900), an electric and power plant (1915), Terrell Health & Counseling Center (1949), and Maier Art Gallery (1951-52). Constructed of red brick with white detailing, the support buildings are compatible with the institutional buildings, although smaller in scale. Additionally, there are several brick and frame houses scattered throughout the campus, including Pines Cottage (1910-1920s), Winfree House (1911), and Norfolk House (1925).

Institutional construction continued in the third quarter of the twentieth century with the erection of Michels Athletic Center (1960-1962), Bell Hall (1963), and the Leggett Building (1971-1975). Bell Hall and the Leggett Building were both designed by the architecture firm of Clark, Nexsen & Owen. All buildings exhibit the influence of the International Style as they lack architectural ornament, have flat roofs, and are designed to emphasize volume over mass. The most notable building constructed in the 1960s and 1970s is the Houston Memorial Chapel (1969), designed by Vincent G. Kling & Associates. The Neo-Expressionist building is red brick like the other institutional buildings around campus; however, its sculptural form is a distinct expression of its time.

Discuss the district's general setting and/or streetscapes, including current property uses (and historic uses if different), such as industrial, residential, commercial, religious, etc. For rural historic districts, please include a description of land uses.

The proposed Randolph-Macon Woman's College Historic District is an approximately 46.52-acre collegiate campus situated in a distinguished residential neighborhood in Lynchburg, Virginia (and partially included in the Rivermont Historic District, NRHP 2003). The proposed historic district continues to function as a college campus into the present, albeit the college was renamed "Randolph College" in 2007 when the school became co-educational. The campus features a main circular drive and brick paths connecting the institutional buildings, apart from the art gallery, which is situated towards the north end of campus along with modern athletic fields and courts. The campus is set back from the road upon a hill, with a gently sloping lawn between it and Rivermont Avenue.

#### 4. District's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the district, such as when it was established, how it developed over time, and significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.) Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board.

If the district is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

First established in Lynchburg in 1891, the history of Randolph-Macon Woman's College (RMWC) dates back to the 1830 charter of Randolph-Macon College in Boydton, Virginia. In 1890, the original charter was expanded and amended allowing the Board of Trustees to establish other "schools, academies, or other institutions of learning for the instruction of the youth of the land."<sup>1</sup> Over the next two years, the board opened two preparatory schools for boys, in Bedford and Front Royal followed by a preparatory school for girls in Danville in 1897. Under the leadership of Dr. William Waugh Smith, the Randolph-Macon College Board of Trustees approved plans to establish a college for women in Lynchburg on March 10, 1891. Smith and his colleagues worked diligently to secure land and money for the institution.<sup>2</sup> The city of Lynchburg was booming in 1890 with several land companies working to expand and develop its outer limits. One of those land companies, the Rivermont Land Company, platted what is now the Rivermont neighborhood, which included a 19.8-acre parcel for a "Lynchburg Woman's College" on its 1891 plat. The Rivermont neighborhood was originally in Campbell County until 1908, when it became part of Lynchburg.<sup>3</sup> Smith campaigned in Lynchburg to raise money for the school, and its citizens, businesses, and religious congregations donated \$220,000 in about two months. Apart from the parcel for the campus, the Rivermont Land Company also donated \$40,000 in cash and \$60,000 in company stock to the Randolph-Macon College Board of Trustees.<sup>4</sup>

With the land and finances in place, the Building Committee then elected William M. Poindexter from Washington, DC. to design the building for Randolph-Macon Woman's College. John P. Pettyjohn was hired as the builder. Dr. Smith and Poindexter toured small colleges along the east coast to study their architecture. Poindexter then designed Main Hall, employing the Queen Anne style. Construction commenced and the college was prospecting to open in September 1893. However, an economic depression soon seized the nation and cash flow slowed. The Rivermont Land Company went into receivership in June 1893, and it was only through the tireless effort of Pettyjohn that Main Hall was ready for students in the fall of 1893, although the third floor went unfinished until the next year.<sup>5</sup> Main Hall was designed to house all operations of the school, including administrative offices, classrooms, and dormitory rooms.<sup>6</sup> In 1893, there were seventy-seven students (thirty-six boarders and forty-one day students), twelve faculty members including Dr. Smith, and a college physician, as well as two preparatory department staff and a matron.<sup>7</sup>

The college quickly grew throughout the rest of the decade and well into the twentieth century. In 1897, the six students earned the first four-year degrees. In 1899, the first Field Day was held on May 1<sup>st</sup> and the first sorority, the Sigma Chapter of Chi Omega, was established on campus. Both May Day and sorority life remained popular social activities at RMWC throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The same year, the first RMWC Student Government was elected, and the Honor System was initiated.<sup>8</sup> A milestone in the school occurred in 1901 when it became the first college for women accredited for membership in the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools in the Southern States.<sup>9</sup> As the school's educational and social opportunities expanded, so too did interest in attending RMWC. Large building campaigns in the first decade of the twentieth century expanded dormitory and educational spaces. With the construction of the dormitory, East Hall, the school could lodge



more than three hundred students.<sup>10</sup> In 1909, students performed the first Greek play, a tradition which continues today, and the first May Queen was elected.<sup>11</sup> Other buildings constructed in this decade include Winfree Observatory (1900), Carnegie Science Hall/Psychology Building (1906), Jones Memorial Library/Thoresen Hall (1906), West Hall (1906), and Wright/New Hall (1909).

The school continued to expand in the 1920s with the Smith Memorial Building opening in 1923 by Vice-President, Calvin Coolidge. Webb Hall, a dormitory, also opened in 1923, allowing the RMWC to accommodate a larger student body. During this decade, the school began to plan for a new music building and a larger library to accommodate the school's growing collection of books and other written materials. Stanhope Johnson designed by both buildings in the Georgian Revival style. On November 1, 1929, Lipscomb Library opened at the east end of the range and on April 17, 1930, Presser Hall, the music building, opened at the corner of Rivermont and Norfolk avenues.<sup>12</sup>

Growth was steady from the 1930s into the 1950s. The red brick wall along Rivermont and Norfolk avenues was built in 1930. Several buildings, including the Martin Science Building (1937) and Terrell Infirmary (1948), were erected during this time and the Mable Kate Whiteside Theater (1939) was dedicated in the Dell. In 1950, Mary's Garden, an English garden, was planted between Lipscomb Library and East Hall. An interesting part of RMWC's history occurred in 1953 with the opening of the Art Gallery (later named the Maier Museum of Art). Situated further back from the main campus, construction of the gallery began in 1951 in collaboration with the National Gallery of Art as part of Cold War efforts to protect the nation's art collection. That same year, RMWC became autonomous from Randolph-Macon College and chose its own Board of Trustees.<sup>13</sup>

The 1960s and 1970s marked a progressive period for not only the nation, but for RMWC. In 1960, two of RMWC's students along with four other Lynchburg area students, participated in the city's first civil rights sit-in. All six students were arrested and imprisoned. The next year, 1961, RMWC was the first Lynchburg college to open its doors to students of all races. Apart from pushing for civil rights, RMWC students were also vocal in advocating for women's rights, including urging for more access to birth control. In 1961, sororities were abolished and 1970 marked the year the last May Queen was elected as the student body rebuffed from traditional female norms. In 1970, the first male graduated from RMWC as one of seven men to graduate from the school between 1972 and 1979.<sup>14</sup> During this time the school's architecture became more progressive as well. Most notably, Houston Chapel (1969), built in the Neo-Expressionist style, experimented with sculptural forms and modern materials. Its architecture is in sharp contrast with the formal architecture of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century on campus. The Michels Athletic Center (1962), Bell Hall (1963), and Leggett Building (1971-1975) are all influenced by the Modern movement.

RMWC has continued to grow into the present. In 1980, two hundred and seven students graduated, one of the largest classes in its history. In 2005, the first graduate program, Master of Arts in Teaching, was initiated. The following year, the Board of Trustees voted to become coeducational, and the school's name was changed to Randolph College. The first coeducational class arrived on campus in the fall of 2007 and seventy-seven men (including transfers) began attending classes.

The proposed Randolph-Macon Woman's College Historic District appears to be eligible for National Register listing with significance on the local level under Criterion A in the area of Education as one of the first and longest-operating female colleges in the South that evolved over the years to reflect the changing roles of women in society. The proposed historic district also potentially eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a cohesive campus that includes the full array of buildings and structures associated with a small residential college. The campus buildings date from 1891 to 1975 and represent the continued growth of the college and expansion of its curriculum. Designed by prominent local and national architects in a range of styles – including Queen Anne, Georgian

Revival, Colonial Revival, Neo-Expressionism, and the International Style – the buildings also reflect changing aesthetics over nearly a century while retaining a harmonious character in scale, setting, and the use of red brick construction that gives Randolph-Macon Woman’s College a unique identity. The proposed Period of Significance begins in 1891, with the initial plans and land acquisition for the college and ends in 1975 with the construction of the most recent building (Leggett Hall).

## Bibliography

“A Trip Through Time: Celebrating the College’s 125th Anniversary.” *Randolph, The Randolph College Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 2, April 2016).

Brother, Elizabeth Latta. “Town and Gown: An Enduring Relationship” *Randolph-Macon Woman’s College Alumnae Bulletin Centennial Issue*, vol. 85, no. 1.

Chambers, S. Allen. *Lynchburg: An Architectural History*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1981.

Cornelius, Roberta D. *The History of Randolph-Macon Woman’s College*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1951.


Glass, Meta. Untitled. *Randolph-Macon Woman’s College Alumnae Bulletin Centennial Issue*, vol. 85, no. 1.

**5. Property Ownership** (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: ☒ Public\Local \_\_\_\_\_ Public\State \_\_\_\_\_ Public\Federal \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Applicant/Sponsor** (Individual and/or organization sponsoring preparation of the PIF, with contact information. For more than one sponsor, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: Jonathan P. Tyree, CPA  
organization: Randolph College  
street & number: 2500 Rivermont Avenue  
city or town: Lynchburg state: VA zip code: 24503  
e-mail: jtyree@randolphcollege.edu telephone: 434-947-8135

Applicant's Signature:   
Date: 5/5/2025

• • Signature required for processing all applications. • •

In the event of organization sponsorship, you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: Jonathan P. Tyree  
Daytime Telephone: 434-947-8135

**Applicant Information** (Individual completing form if other than applicant/sponsor listed above)

name/title: Kate Kronau & Alison Blanton  
organization: Hill Studio  
street & number: 120 Campbell Avenue SW  
city or town: Roanoke state: VA zip code: 24011  
e-mail: kkronau@hillstudio.com telephone: 540-342-5263  
Date: May 5, 2025

**7. Notification**

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager.

name/title: Wynter C. Benda/ City Manager  
locality: Lynchburg (Ind. City)  
street & number: 900 Church Street  
city or town: Lynchburg state: VA zip code: 24504  
telephone: (434) 455-3990

<sup>1</sup> Randolph-Macon College's original charter, granted by the Legislature of Virginia on February 3, 1830, quoted in Roberta D. Cornelius, *The History of Randolph-Macon Woman's College*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1951), p. 3

<sup>2</sup> Cornelius, *The History of Randolph-Macon Woman's College*, pp. 3-4

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 27-28

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Latta Brother, "Town and Gown: An Enduring Relationship," (*Randolph-Macon Woman's College Alumnae Bulletin Centennial Issue*, vol. 85, no. 1), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> S. Allen Chambers, *Lynchburg: An Architectural History*, (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1981), p. 309.

<sup>6</sup> Meta Glass, Untitled, (*Randolph-Macon Woman's College Alumnae Bulletin Centennial Issue*, vol. 85, no. 1), p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Cornelius, *The History of Randolph-Macon Woman's College*, p. 42.

---

<sup>8</sup> “A Trip Through Time: Celebrating the College’s 125th Anniversary,” (*Randolph, The Randolph College Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 2, April 2016), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4

<sup>10</sup> Cornelius, *The History of Randolph-Macon Woman’s College*, p. 60.

<sup>11</sup> “A Trip Through Time,” p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Chambers, *Lynchburg: An Architectural History*, pp. 437-38.


<sup>13</sup> “A Trip Through Time,” p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 27.



## PIF BOUNDARY MAP

Randolph-Macon Woman's College  
City of Lynchburg, VA  
DHR ID# 118-5763

 Proposed Boundary


0 200 400 600 Feet





## PIF BOUNDARY MAP

Randolph-Macon Woman's College  
City of Lynchburg, VA  
DHR ID# 118-5763

 Proposed Boundary

0 200 400 600 Feet



Rivermont Historic District  
VLR 2002, NRHP 2003  
DHR ID# 118-0334

Main Hall  
VLR, NRHP 1979  
DHR ID# 118-0149



























































